



Kingston Conservation Advisory Council
Monthly Meeting, City Hall
Minutes

June 6, 2013 6:00 – 8:30 pm

Attendance:

Julie Noble (Chair)
Emilie Hauser
Gregg Swanzey
Casey Schwartz
Diane Bonavita
Karen Corey (by phone)

Guests:

Kevin McEvoy, Urban Agriculture Initiative
Jennifer Schwartz-Berky, Urban Agriculture Initiative
Rebecca Martin, Urban Agriculture Initiative
Michelle Muller, Urban Agriculture Initiative
Jeff LeJava, managing director at the Land Use Law Center at Pace University (by phone)
Kevin Pagini, student at SUNY ESF (by phone)
Jennifer Metzger, Rosendale Environmental Commission/Citizens for Local Power
Daniel Duthie, utility attorney representing Citizens for Local Power
Amanda LaValle, Ulster County Department of Environment

Welcome and Call to Order: 6:10 pm

There was no public comment (besides that already on the agenda).

Special Presentation: Kingston Urban Agriculture Initiative (Presentation & Q&A)

Jennifer Schwartz-Berky provided a general overview of what urban agriculture includes and the barriers to urban agriculture within the zoning laws. She pointed out that Kingston has significant food desert areas and that an increase in urban agriculture would provide low-income residents of Kingston with access to fresh food. Jeff LeJava talked about the concerns that cities raise about urban agriculture and his work across the country looking at urban agriculture.

The Urban Agriculture Committee feels that the Kingston Comprehensive Plan Update is an ideal time to redo the zoning to include potential urban agriculture. The comp plan is the key document for allowing this to happen because it determines what uses will and will not be allowed. They have a meeting with the comp plan committee on June 17 to discuss these issues and would like the CAC or CAC members to attend as supports of the initiative.

Questions/Concerns Raised:

Julie: How are we going to communicate this with the community?

Emilie: Having farms and upscale food is different from just giving people access to food. Will increasing organic farming really help low-income families have access to food?

Old Business:

1. Minutes were accepted.
2. *Natural Resources/Open Space Inventory*: Emilie says that all of the relevant layers have now been provided to Carlos, the volunteer working on the GIS programs. Carlos still needs to get the city's layers from either Steve and Julie Noble or Gregg Swanzey, but time coordination has been an issue. Gretchen Stevens at Hudsonia has finished her habitat survey and has provided us with a PDF version of the map. She has updated to include the visible streams, the habitat inventory, and the outlines of the city parks. Julie suggested that we all review the map sent by Gretchen and reply with comments within a week.

Special Presentation: *Fortis, Inc. Merger and Municipal Consortium*

Jennifer Metzger, a representative of Citizens for Local Power and a member of the Rosendale Environmental Commission, and Dan Duthie, an attorney for Citizens for Local Power, talked about the progress in the fight against the Fortis merger and the movement to form a municipal consortium for negotiating electricity rates.

Dan Duthie explained that the Consumer Board at the state level was disbanded, which means that no one is giving voice to the consumers about electricity prices anymore. He joined together a bunch of municipalities to moderate the rate increase and negotiate directly with the power companies. They propose doing the same thing in Ulster County area. He provided the CAC with a version of the engagement letter and the proposed contract between him and the municipality to manage the consortium.

A vote was held about whether to send a recommendation to the Common Council that Kingston become part of the consortium. The vote was for the recommendation.

Special Presentation: *Green Infrastructure Projects in Kingston, Kevin Pagini*

Kevin Pagini, a student at ESF, presented remotely on his work investigating the possibility of using green infrastructure to solve/reduce the combined sewer overflow (CSO) problem in Kingston. He investigated the Hasbrouck Sewershed (cause of most of the CSO events) and allowed a budget of \$3.5 million for green infrastructure projects (the amount proposed in the control plan for constructing a storage tank). He used a number of criteria to select optimal sites for placement of green infrastructure (high soil porosity, public ownership, location within the watershed, size of parcel). He found that implementing a number of green infrastructure projects could capture enough rainwater to eliminate the CSO problem at the same cost as the tank, while additionally providing benefits to the community (lower energy costs, more green area, etc.).

Amanda LaValle shared local green infrastructure initiatives, e.g. rain gardens, and showed a map of creating a green infrastructure hub at the Ulster County office campus.

Old Business Continued:

1. **Budget:** Diane put together a letter recommending a budget for the CAC for advertising, membership in organizations, etc.
2. **New Members:** Now that Judith's term has expired and Lillian has resigned, we only have 6 members, and we can have up to 9. Committee is asked to think of potential members and bring them to the next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:06 pm.

Next Meeting: August 1, 2013.